



A Creative Forum for the Audio Arts

Kubala-Sosna Ovation Speaker Cables: All The Truth, Nothing But The Truth

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Current interconnects, speaker cables and power cords deliver far better sound than in the early days of high-end audio. Sadly, buying audio cables back then came down to choosing the lesser of two evils. Too bright, too dark, two-dimensional, too boomy, too veiled. Fortunately, the best of today's audio cables offer greater linearity and resolution, reduced colorations and significantly improved transparency and dynamics compared to yesteryear's products.

Howard Sosna (now retired) and Joe Kubala's cables, along with those from Transparent Audio, Audience-AV, and AudioQuest, have been my main reference cables for reviews for over a decade. My connection began with Kubala-Sosna's Emotion line, continued through the Elation series and most recently extended to the circa 2017 Realization speaker cables. (Unfortunately, Kubala-Sosna's Ovation interconnects are currently financially out-of-reach at this time due to my need for an 18-foot run of balanced interconnects between my preamplifier and amplifier.) Howard and Joe's cables have always excelled when it came to soundstaging, solid, three-dimensional imaging, midrange presence and spaciousness.

My first encounter of the audio kind with Kubala-Sosna cables occurred many years ago in Bill Parrish's GTT Audio room at Axpona. Certainly, evaluating a single product's sound in a totally unfamiliar setting is extremely challenging, if next to impossible. Still, a product might merit further investigation if it's used in several good sounding rooms. Such was the case with the Kubala-Sosna Emotion cabling. Jump ahead to last year's Axpona and the GTT Audio room was now wired with a complete loom of Kubala-Sosna's new flagship line Ovation cables. And as always, the GTT Audio room was of the best sounding rooms at the show. So shortly after Axpona I reached out to Joe about the possibility of reviewing the new Ovation cables. And here we are.

Kubala-Sosna is no johnny come lately to the cable market either. Howard and Joe built their first cable prototypes in the early 2000s, incorporated in 2003 and began shipping product the following year. The company's very first product was the Emotion cable line and the rest is history. Kubala-Sosna's latest Ovation speaker cables incorporate the company's latest thinking on cable design and employs their newly developed Optimiz⁴ architecture. Ovation cables according to Kubala-Sosna, underwent eight years of testing and development and "...offers the largest performance envelope we have ever created. Ovation continues to utilize the basic tenets of our two US Patents (that touched upon the cables characteristic impedance and extremely low ratio of capacitance to inductance--MBA) but with significant changes to stranding and geometry."



Kubala-Sosna latest Ovation speaker cables are approximately an inch in diameter, moderately stiff and terminated with heavy, gold plated, spade lugs. Take care when connecting the cables to ensure the spade lugs lie flat against the binding posts and are securely tightened down. One detail that sets Kubala-Sosna's cables apart from other brands is break-in time. According to their website, the Ovation Optimiz⁴ architecture cables sound good out of the box and are fully broken in after 48 hrs of playing.

Presenting The Case

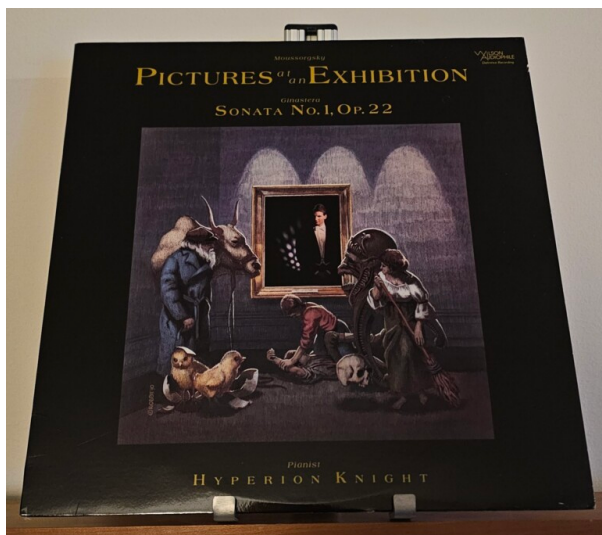
The Ovation speaker cables were used with a number of solid-state amplifiers including the likes of Goldmund's Telos 1000 and Grandinote's Demone monoblocks, Soulvolution's 312 and Quad's 303 stereo amplifiers and last but not least, the sensational new monoblock IDEM and stereo DIADEM amplifiers from the reborn Swiss based company Stellavox (stay tuned for the DIADEM review!) To put things in perspective: the Ovation speaker cables allowed each amplifier to realize their full potential and the strut their stuff. Never will these speaker cables limit an amplifier's or system's performance. Take for example here, the David Bowie "Heroes" track from Peter Gabriel's *Scratch My Back* (Classic Records PGLP12) with its enormous soundstage and sense of ambient space and dynamics rarely heard on rock LPs. And the Ovation cables let every bit of that stage develop and envelop the listener.



Realism and beauty are the operative terms here. As good as Kubala-Sosna's earlier Realization cable line was—and make no mistake, it was ear candy—their new top-of-the-line Ovation line with the new OptimiZ⁴ architecture is in a league of its own. Simply a revelatory product. In fact, the Ovation speaker cables are so special—and I've listened to quite a few excellent speaker cables in house in the last year—it's like inserting a new component into the system. No exaggeration.

Audiophiles can and will endlessly debate about how to bridge the gap in sound quality between live and recorded music. Pose this question to a dozen audiophiles and you're guaranteed to receive a dozen different answers. In my case, the path to audio nirvana is paved with reducing a system's artificiality; namely that inability to properly or completely recreate the complex structure of instrumental overtones. While the Ovation cable transparency, low end and low-level resolution are second to none, it's above all the cable's unique ability to balance out that ratio of fundamental to harmonic overtones that differentiates it from other speaker cables. Take for instance, the opening "Round About Midnight" track from that one-of-a-kind Jeton direct-to-disc album *Moonlight Serenade* (Jeton Records 1003315) featuring the legendary duo of Ray Brown on double bass and Laurindo Almeda on guitar. One can toss around well worn cliches such as, the music is between the notes. That's true, but it's also about melody, rhythm,

dynamics, and subtle nuances between beats. Here Stellavox's new DIADEM amplifiers paired with Ovation cables really maintain those four qualities and lays bare the beauty of Almeida's playing. The solidity. The preciseness. The delicacy. Most of all the decay of each note with a large side order of air surrounding his guitar. All wrapped up into one neat package.



The Ovation speaker cables are also uniquely capable of preserving and conveying a recording's dynamics and authority. Take again, Stellavox's Diadem stereo amplifier and the now vintage Dave Wilson recording of Hyperion Knight performing Moussorgsky's *Pictures at an Exhibition* (Wilson Audio W-9025) arranged for solo piano! Here the cables simply magically disappear and let the music bloom. The warmth, clarity and above all authority in that power region of Knight's Hamburg Steinway piano really shine through in the piece's "First Movement."



Nor will the Ovation speaker cables limit—if your amplifiers and speakers are up to the task—the system's bottom end performance either. Low frequencies with either the Grandinote, Soullution or Stellavox amplifiers were all superlative, if albeit as it should be, different from amplifier to amplifier. And only slightly less so with that over performing \$1700 stereo Quad 303 stereo amplifier. For example, take that spectacular Kevin Gray remastering of Gary Karr, accompanied by Harmon Lewis on organ, performing *Kol Nidrei* (Anaglophonic/King Records CNLP1335). For years, this recording was a source of constant debate between me and a late audiobuddy. Karr's double bass on his system always sounded bloated and larger than life; not in my system but he would always refuse to admit that. Years later, the current system with the Ovation cabling just reveals all the beauty of this Gary Karr recording (he didn't record many clunkers, if any, in my experience). There's especially with the Stellavox IDEM amplifier a spooky sense of Karr sitting in front of the listener. One can not only hear but sense the bowing of the strings, the pressure of the bow on the strings and most of all the density of the strings. That's accompanied by Harmon Lewis' organ that absolutely pressurizes and defines the dimensions—in particular the height and feeling of the ceiling—of the recording space.



Lastly, take a larger scale recording such as that amazing sounding, extremely early (1955?) RCA 2-track stereo recording of Munch, Heifetz and the Boston Symphony Orchestra performing Beethoven's *Violin Concerto in D* (RCA LSC-1992). Take here for example the serene "Second Movement: Larghetto." (either the original 33 rpm release, the vintage 45 rpm Classic Records or more recent 45 rpm Analogue Production all serve well here). Each and every orchestral section (strings, reeds and horns) is clearly delineated and the interplay between Heifetz and BSO is wonderfully rendered. Heifetz takes his place at the front of the orchestra and the tone and beauty of his Stradivarius violin makes ones heart skip a beat or two! Never a piercing note even with the highest strings.

The Verdict

How do the Ovation cables compare to Kubala-Sosna's other cable lines? The Emotions imaged superbly and were warm, a little forgiving and a touch soft. The Elations were a step toward a more neutral and resolving cable but lost just a touch of the Emotions musical beauty. The Realization cable line was a return to the roots and soul of the Emotion cables but with far more resolution and transparency and a reduction in colorations. And the new Ovation speaker cable clears the bases.

Other speaker cables may offer slightly more resolution, sound slightly faster or be more liquid sounding. But I have yet to encounter another cable as balanced, linear, dynamic, and capable of expansive soundstage, exceptional dimensionality, ultra resolution, and deep, detailed bass as the Ovations.

When all is said and done, the best audio cables should be seen and not heard. Imparting as little of their character as possible to the sound of the audio system. Neither adding to nor subtracting from the music. If there's one cable that meets those criteria, it's the new Kubala-Sosna Ovation speaker cables. My new reference. And for those searching for the best in audio cables, possibly yours, too.

Ovation Speaker Cables

Price: \$16,500 first meter, \$2800 each additional meter

Kubala-Sosna

www.kubala-sosna.com